

# ***Growing in Christ***

## ***Mankind: God's Handiwork***

Lesson #3 for October 20, 2012

Scriptures: Genesis 1:27; Romans 5:12-19; Genesis 1:26; Mark 12:13-17; Genesis 2:19-25; Acts 17:26.

1. This lesson is about us—human beings originally made in the image of God—and what happened that caused many of us to end up being more like the image of Satan.
2. There are four existential questions, questions about our existence, that have challenged the thinking of human beings from ancient times: 1) Where did we come from? 2) Where are we going after we die? 3) Why are we here? And, 4) How do we accomplish the best good in this life? Where should we look for answers?
3. Scripture—God's letter to us—gives us the only authoritative answers to these questions. We did not just happen! We were designed by a divine Creator, and we were intended to become like Him/Them.
4. In an effort to escape from the overbearing and repressive church of the Dark Ages, thinkers sought to find some other explanation for the existential questions. They did not want to believe that they were ultimately responsible to a God who would bring them into judgment and burn them forever in hell. (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14; Revelation 20:12,13) How can we be saved by faith but judged by works? Does our faith work? Does it change our lives?
5. Many years ago, a young teenager living in Los Angeles became interested in the game of soccer. Few Americans knew about or cared about soccer at that point in time. Near where he lived on the campus of the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), soccer was played on Sunday afternoons. He always made sure that he was there to watch the games. In fact, he arrived early. A professor from UCLA, a doctor whose specialty was the history of science, also was interested in soccer. The two of them sat on the bleachers and fell into conversation.
6. After weeks of discussing back and forth the merits of evolution versus creation, the young teenager on one Sunday afternoon thought of a different approach: He said to the history professor: "Since neither one of us was there when everything began and since you will not accept the biblical record as authoritative from Someone who was there, let's move to the other end of history and talk about us now. Let us suppose that evolution is the correct explanation for our origins. That is, suppose that from that day until this, progress has been made by the strong dominating the weak and by the destruction of weaker beings with no thought of any moral implications and everything else that Darwinian evolution implies. By contrast, let us consider a society in which God created us to be His children, with all of us loving each other and loving Him." Then the teenager turned to the history professor and said, "Which of those two societies would you rather live in?" The history of science professor thought for a moment and said, "You got me!"
7. If society came about through a long line of developing single-celled organisms which eventually developed into amphibians then into fish and birds and next into mammals and eventually into man, then human beings must chart their own course into the future.
8. By contrast, God carefully designed human beings with a plan that they should grow to be more and more like Him. He created us male and female, each with a different set of dominant characteristics. He created us that way so that in a truly Christian marriage relationship, we could learn from each other and thus become truly more like God. Creation

was not a haphazard, chance event. Every day, we should be living out God's design for us. If Jesus does not plan to come back, why did He come the first time?

9. If we developed out of "nothing," we might be able to decide our own course of action without reference to a Divine Being who will someday judge us for what we have done. But, then, we also must accept as fact that there is nothing beyond this life.
10. How do we explain the facts that while the mass media and the scientific community constantly promote the idea that we developed completely by chance without any supernatural intervention, yet at the same time, when there is some kind of a natural or man-made disaster, the media immediately suggest we all should pray for God to help us resolve the problem? Or, they call the disaster "an act of God."
11. Read Jude 14, Romans 5:12-21, and 1 Corinthians 15:20-22. Many other texts could be cited as well to provide evidence for the fact that throughout Scripture, the prophets and apostles did not try to explain creation but simply accepted it as a historical fact. Is that naïve to take Scriptures at face value? Why do so many scholars—even biblical scholars—regard the story of Adam—in fact, all of Genesis 1-11—as nothing more than mythical events wrapped in undiscoverable ancient mystery and which are nothing more than symbols of ideas or events of which we cannot prove anything?
12. Read Genesis 1:26,27. Is there any question about God's intention and plan for the human race? Think how far we have fallen from God's original plan that we all should be living in the Garden of Eden. We should be living in loving relationships with not only other human beings and God but also even taking loving care of all the other creatures God has made.
13. Read Mark 12:13-17. The Pharisees had come to Jesus with a hidden agenda which they hoped to use to trap Him. Of course, Jesus immediately saw through their plot and asked to be shown the coin which was used to pay the temple tax. Jesus' practical message seems to have been:

"Give your money to Caesar; it has his image on it, and thus it belongs to him. But give yourselves to God. You bear his image, and you belong to him."—Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1998), p. 515.
14. Are we acting like we truly belong to God?
15. Ellen White told us that at the third coming of Jesus there will be a giant panorama shown in the sky reviewing the truth about the events in the history of sin and the plan of salvation. (4SP 481.2; GC 666.3; SR 423.1; Mar 343.2) Try to imagine what it was like when Adam and then Eve were first created. What was that first Sabbath like? How was it celebrated? How did Adam under the inspiration of God "name" all the animals in one afternoon? Did he just name the large animal groups or did he get into more detail? How did he pick out those names? How would he have categorized the animals? The only knowledge he could have possibly had at that point in time was knowledge which had been given him by God. And with his perfect memory, Adam knew each of the animals from that time on.
16. But, he also discovered that there were no other creatures exactly like himself. Read Genesis 2:20-25. Clearly, God had many different ways in which He could have made a companion for Adam. He could have made her in the same way He had made him. But, God made her from a rib of Adam to teach both of them—and us—that the entire human race is descended from a single human body. We were intended to live in relationships. We were intended to love each other, to care about each other, and to depend on each other as we live and work together. This should have been our first line of defense against the terrible evil

of selfishness.

17. Read Genesis 1:27; 3:20; and Acts 17:26. We are all part of an unbroken chain. No human life has developed apart from that one original pair of human beings.
18. If we accept some form of the evolutionary model, then we have a hard time trying to explain where sin came from. If we came about by chance, what makes one kind of action good and another kind of action evil? For them, there really is no inherent evil. Is good determined by whatever gives one person dominance over others? If evolution and “survival of the fittest” or more accurately “survival of those who survive” is the explanation for where we came from, then violence, selfishness, and dominance of the strong over the weaker preceded the idea of sin, perhaps by millions of years.
19. Did death actually precede sin? This is about as far away from the biblical model as one could imagine.
20. What is the purpose of a plan of salvation if God does not exist and if there never will be any supernatural intervention into human history? Why did Jesus come the first time?
21. 1 Corinthians 15:26 calls death the “last enemy.” How can death be the last enemy if it was part of God’s original plan in developing a human race or if we just came about by chance and natural selection? Once again, we see that the biblical record is in diametric opposition to the ideas of evolution. Read Paul’s comments in Romans 5:9-19 and Colossians 3:10. We certainly could not call these comments inspired if they do not represent the truth. Ellen White spoke about a curse that came on the human race as a result of three events: 1) Adam’s fall, 2) Cain’s murder of Abel, and 3) The terrible deterioration into almost total depravity that led to the flood. Could the people who lived before the flood have been more evil than the world is today?
22. Fortunately, the Bible does not just talk about our fallen deterioration. Read Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; and Ephesians 4:23,24. In His foreknowledge God knew what would happen when we sinned. And before we had even done that, He had put in place a plan whereby we could not only recover from sin but also grow into the image of our Older Brother, Jesus Christ. We were designed so that we can become like what we focus on and think about every day. (GC 555.1) So, by coming and showing us the kind of lives we should live and answering the questions in the great controversy, Jesus Christ has made it possible for us to be restored to a right relationship with God. He has defeated Satan’s claims against God.
23. Every morning, we can be renewed into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. Otherwise, Satan will find his way into our environment and our lives and wreak havoc.
24. But, Satan will do everything possible to prevent this restoration into God’s image. (Galatians 5:16,17; Ephesians 6:10-13) He has and will do everything he can to manipulate the environment in such a way as to control those who are dependent on the environment. If Satan controls the environment and thus controls us—at least our feelings—are we thus demon possessed?

The true object of education is to restore the image of God in the soul. In the beginning God created man in His own likeness. He endowed him with noble qualities. His mind was well balanced, and all the powers of his being were harmonious. But the Fall and its effects have perverted these gifts. Sin has marred and well-nigh obliterated the image of God in man. It was to restore this that the plan of salvation was devised, and a life of probation was granted to man. To bring him back to the perfection in which he was first created, is the

great object of life,—the object that underlies every other. It is the work of parents and teachers, in the education of the youth, to co-operate with the divine purpose; and in so doing they are “laborers together with God.” [1 Corinthians 3:9.] —Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 595.2; *CE* 63.3; *1MCP* 359.2; compare *RH*, Aug 19, 1884, par. 2; *FE* 82.1; *1MCP* 99.2; *5T* 322.1; *ST*, January 31, 1884 par. 10.

25. So many people in our day have taken science to be their “god.” In their paradigm, anything that supposedly is scientific must be true. If that is true, how do we explain the fact that the two most foundational teachings of physics—quantum theory and general relativity—directly contradict each other? The very idea of progress through evolution is a contradiction of the second law of thermodynamics.
26. Should we, for whatever reason, reject the biblical explanation of our origins and pretend to set our own course in the future? Or, should we recognize that a supernatural Supreme Being is in control of the entire universe and has our best interests at heart. Should our primary motivation be love, fellowship, even brotherhood and sisterhood? Or, as far as possible, should we be motivated to dominate all around us?
27. If you recognize that we are created with the intention of becoming more and more like God, then you must accept your God-given responsibilities. We must do our best to resist Satan and his temptations.
28. How do you personally answer the great existential questions? Or, do you choose not to think about them?
29. When you read Genesis 1:1-2:3, how does it make you feel?

We learn that God stands at the beginning of, and behind, all things. Pastor and biblical scholar James Montgomery Boice comments, “Grammatically speaking, there is only one subject in all these verses: God Himself. Everything else is object. Objects are acted upon. Light, air, water, dry land, vegetation, sun, moon, stars, fish, birds, land animals—all are objects in a creative process where God alone is subject. In these verses we are told that God ‘saw’ (vss. 4,10,12,18,21,25), ‘separated’ (vss. 4,7), ‘called’ (vss. 5,8,10), ‘made’ (vss. 7,16,25), ‘set’ (vs. 17), ‘created’ (vss. 21,27), and explained to the man and woman what he had done (vss. 28-30). Moreover, before that, God spoke (vss. 3,6,9,14,20), as a result of which everything else unfolded.”—*Genesis, an Expositional Commentary*, vol. 1, Genesis 1-11 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), pp. 81,82. (Quoted in *Adult Teacher’s Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, p. 37.)

30. God not only created us to live in wonderful fellowship with Himself but also gave us the Sabbath every week as an opportunity to set aside all our daily responsibilities and focus on that relationship. Someday, would you like to celebrate a Sabbath like that first one at the beginning of creation? When God re-creates the world at the third coming, don’t you suppose that we will be able to celebrate our first Sabbath in the new earth much like they did that first Sabbath in the Garden of Eden? Wouldn’t you like to be there?

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Last Modified: September 9, 2012

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